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ABSTRACT

This bibliography contains selected resources (1965-1983) to help parents and teachers assist young children with death-related concerns. Included are materials for adults: an annotated list of books on death (13 citations); a bibliography of articles about children and death from recent literature (50 citations); and an annotated list of periodicals and organizations concerned with death, dying, and bereavement (5 entries). Materials for children are: an annotated bibliography of books about death with recommended age levels (15 citations); and an annotated list of audio-visual materials (7 citations). (AG)

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RESOURCES FOR HELPING YOUNG CHILDREN DEAL WITH DEATH

by

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ABSTRACT

Numerous selected resources to help parents and teachers of young children with death-related concerns are provided. Included are an annotated list of books on death for adults, a bibliography of articles about children and death from the recent literature, an annotated list of periodicals and organizations concerned with dying, death, and bereavement, an annotated bibliography of books about death for young children with recommended age levels, and an annotated list of audiovisuals suitable for young children.

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RESOURCES FOR HELPING YOUNG CHILDREN DEAL WITH DEATH

INTRODUCTION

The question of young children's death concerns has received considerable attention from educators and psychologists for some time. Over 100 journal articles about death education in the schools have been published during the last decade. They offer rationales, goals, suggestions for learning activities, methods, personal accounts of "teachable moments" well used, and the like. Of these articles about 30 specifically discuss the subject of teaching and helping children deal with death at the preschool or the elementary school level. In addition to these valuable contributions by practicioners, a large research literature providing insights and information on children's understandings and feelings about death are available. Further, there are some outstanding reference guides and books for teachers (and parents), children's books, and even some films and filmstrips designed for young audiences (Wass, et. al., 1980, Wass & Corr, 1982). Thus, a wealth of resources exists and is growing (Wass, et. al., in press). At the same time it appears that teachers of young children see the need and are willing to consider some sort of death education, formal or informal, in their curricula (Crase & Crase, 1979). So what is the problem?

Answers are given in survey results. In one survey, for example, (Henney & Barnhardt, 1980) only four percent of the elementary school teachers reported that death is part of their curriculum. Over 90 percent said they had received no professional preparation for dealing with death in the classrooms. It may take some time before teacher education institutions will routinely offer such preparation as an integral part of their program.

Meanwhile, death cannot be suspended. It has been suggested that teachers use opportunities for self-development provided in conferences, workshops, and seminars on the subject of death. This is a good suggestion, but, unfortunately, these meetings often take place at the wrong time, in the wrong place, and may be entirely too costly for the teacher to attend. There is a third possibility. It is a long-established tradition in many fields, including education, namely self-initiated and self-directed study and professional development. We all do it to try to keep up or catch up with new developments. Also using this method, we can venture into a new area such as death, especially when we are convinced that it is an essential part of what we are about. The kind of self-study proposed here can be pursued at home, at convenient times, and may be less expensive. It has been suggested that death can be taught with no special preparation at all (Stanford & Perry, 1976) but that is not true. Such flippant statements have been strongly criticized and their dangers convincingly illustrated (Rosenthal, 1980). Death is a sensitive, significant, and difficult subject about which no one is neutral. It requires serious study and consideration particularly in relationship to the growing child in an educational context in today's society. Following is a listing of selected resources ~~to~~ to assist in such study.

It is considered representative. The resources listed are of two types. One is intended for teachers and consists of periodical articles, chapters, and other resources ~~books~~ for self-study and self-preparation. The second consists of books and audiovisuals selected for children, individually or in groups, as teaching aids and sources of information and comfort. Entries are annotated except for periodical articles/chapters. These are most numerous (50) and are simply listed because of space considerations.

BOOKS FOR TEACHERS

Feifel, H. (ed) New meanings of death. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977.

This is an update of Herman Feifel's earlier book of readings published in 1959 which was a landmark publication that set the death awareness movement in motion. With very few exceptions the authors of this anthology are recognized experts in their areas. The volume is broad in scope. Feifel is an acclaimed pioneer in death education.

Fulton, R. (ed) in collaboration with Bendiksen, R. Death and identity. Revised edition. Bowie, MD: The Charles Press, 1976.

This anthology has a sociological and social-psychological emphasis and deals particularly with funeral practices and bereavement. Most authors are widely-known experts in the area. Robert Fulton is an internationally recognized sociologist and leader in death education.

Gordon, A.K. & Klass, D. They need to know: How to teach children about death. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979.

This book is designed for teachers and parents and provides an outline of a death education program for all levels including four overall goals, suggested learning activities by grade and suitable resources. It includes a good listing of resources and interesting material in the appendix.

Jackson, E.N. Telling a child about death. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1965.

The author is a Protestant minister, counselor, writer, and lecturer in death education and counseling. In this book he gives valuable advice on how to share thoughts and feelings about death with children. This is a wise and gentle book.

Kastenbaum, R. Death, society and human experience. St. Louis: C.V. Mosby Co., 1977.

Robert Kastenbaum, another pioneer in the death awareness movement has here undertaken the ambitious taks of providing a systematic treatment of the whole field of death and dying. No single author can probably do this. However, Kastenbaum makes a very good attempt. The major strength is in the psychological arena. The book is a valuable contribution.

LeShan, E. Learning to say good-by: When a parent dies. Giovanopoulos, New York: Macmillan, 1978.

LeShan, a widely-known educator, counselor, and author, in this book writes sensitively yet in a straightforward manner about the problems children encounter when a parent dies and how to overcome them with the help of caring adults. The book is non-threatening.

Lonetto, R. Children's conceptions of death. New York: Springer Publishing Co., 1980.

The author, a psychologist, reports on his interviews with Canadian children and includes many of their drawings. The book is well written and shows the author's insights into the child's world of thoughts. The review of other studies in this area is sketchy.

Rudolph, M. Should the children know? Encounters with death in the lives of children. New York: Schocken Books, 1978.

Marguerita Rudolph has taught and directed preschool and day-care programs and is the author of several books. Here she shows how the very young can be helped to deal with death through caring for plants and animals,

through books, and experience with human death.

Shneidman, E.S. (ed) Death: Current Perspectives, 2nd edition. Palo Alto: CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1981

This is the best anthology available in the field of death. Shneidman, an acclaimed thanatologist has carefully assembled articles from the works of authorities in their particular areas. These articles cover a broad range of relevant topics. The book is a valuable source of information for the advanced student of death as well as the beginner.

Wass, H. (ed) Dying: Facing the facts. New York: McGraw-Hill/Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1979.

This is one of the best and most recent comprehensive texts on death and dying. It is a scholarly book, well written, and is used in many college classrooms and libraries. Each chapter is written by a specialist in the particular topic. The book offers a solid base and overview of the entire field of death and dying.

Wass, H., Corr, C.A., Pacholski, R.A., & Sanders, C.M. Death education: An annotated resource guide. New York and Washington: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation & McGraw-Hill International, 1980.

This is the most comprehensive book of its kind in the field of dying and death in the USA or abroad. It includes annotations of over 400 articles, over 20 text and reference books, over 140 bibliographies, 100 organizations, and over 500 audiovisual materials. Volume II is in progress. Expected publication date is 1983.

Wass, H. & Corr, C.A. (eds) Helping children cope with death: Guidelines and resources. New York: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1982.

This short volume offers general guidelines and practical advice to parents and teachers who want to help children deal with death. Unique among the resources is a 155-item annotated bibliography of children's and adolescents' literature on death -- the most extensive published to date--prepared by Hannelore Wass.

Wass, H. & Corr, C.A. (eds) Childhood and death. New York: McGraw-Hill International and Hemisphere Publishing Corporation. In press. Expected publication date 1983.

The editors believe that this volume will be the most comprehensive, up-to-date, authoritative treatment of death and childhood. Each chapter is written by an authority in the area. Two chapters deal with children's concepts and fears about death, and three chapters address the issues of death education. Other chapters discuss the special problems of dying children, bereaved children, and child suicides.

PERIODICAL ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS

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Atkinson, T.L. Teacher intervention with elementary school children in death-related situation. Death Education, 1980, 4 (2), 149-163.

Bertman, S.L. Children's and others' thoughts and expressions about art. In Wass & C.A. Corr (eds) Helping children cope with death: Guidelines and resources. New York: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1982, 11-30.

Blue, R. Mentioning the unmentionable. Teacher, 1975, 92, 54-57, 105-106.

Bryant, E.H. Teacher in crisis: A classmate is dying. The Elementary School Journal, 1978, 78 (4), 232-241.

Butler, A.F. Scratchy is dead. Teacher, 1978, 95, 67-68.

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Delisle, R.G. & Woods-McNamee, A.S. Children's perceptions of death: A look at the appropriateness of selected picture books. Death Education, 1981, 5 (1), 1-13.

Formanek, R. When children ask about death. Elementary School Journal, 1974, 75, 92-97.

Fredlund, D.J. Children and death from the school setting point of view. Journal of School Health, 1977, 47, 533-537.

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Kastenbaum, R. Childhood: The kingdom where creatures die. Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 1974, 3, 11-14.

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Keith, C.R. & Ellis, D. Reactions of pupils and teachers to death in the classroom. The School Counselor, 1978, 25, 228-234.

Klingman, A. Death education through literature: A preventive approach. Death Education, 1980, 4 (3), 271-279.

Knott, J.E. Death Education for all. In H. Wass (ed) Dying - Facing the Facts. New York: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation & McGraw-Hill, 1979, 385-403.

Koocher, G.P. Why isn't the gerbil moving anymore? Discussing death in the home and in the classroom. Children Today, 1974, 4, 18-36.

Koocher, G.P. Childhood, death, and cognitive development. Developmental Psychology, 1973, 9, 369-375.

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Sharapan, H. "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood": Dealing with death on a children's television series. Death Education, 1977, 1 (1), 131-136.

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White, E. Elsom, B., & Pravat, R. Children's conceptions of death. Child Development, 1978, 49, 307-320.

Whitley, E. Grandma: She dies. Childhood Education, 1976, 53 (2), 77-79.

PERIODICALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Death Education (Pedagogy - Counseling - Care).

This quarterly journal was established in 1977. Its founder and editor is Hannelore Wass, Ph.D., Professor of Educational Psychology, College of Education, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611. The publisher is Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1025 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. In addition to articles in death-related teaching, counseling, care, and applied research, the journal features Brief Communications, Letters to the Editor, News & Notes, and an extensive Media Exchange section that provides book and film reviews and annotations in each issue. It is considered one of the leading journals in the field and serves an international, multidisciplinary readership.

Essense (Issues in the Study of Aging, Dying and Death)

This is a Canadian journal with an international readership. It was established in 1977. Its editor is Stephen Fleming, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Psychology, Atkinson College, York University, Downsview, Ontario, Canada. The journal is published by Atkinson College Press, 4700 Keele Street, Downsview, Ontario. This quarterly journal invites authors from any discipline to submit their work. Most published articles emphasize the social and health sciences in the two fields of aging and death. Research is also emphasized. This journal is highly regarded among professionals.

Omega (The Journal of Death and Dying)

This journal was established in 1970. Its editor is Robert Kastenbaum, Ph.D., Director of Gerontological Studies at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona 85281. The publisher is Baywood Publishing Company, Inc., 120 Marine Street, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11735. The focus of this quarterly journal is on the behavioral and psychiatric sciences, theory, research, and practice as well as health services. It is considered one of the leading journals in the field. Its readership is international.

Center for Death Education and Research

This center is directed by Robert Fulton, the renowned leader in the sociology of death. It sponsors research in dying, death, and grief. It is also a repository of death-related materials and sells publications and audiovisual materials. The center is located at 1167 Social Science Building, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

Forum for Death Education and Counseling, Inc.

This nonprofit organization was founded in 1976 and has a diverse membership of health professionals, counselors, educators, funeral directors, and lay persons. It sponsors annual conferences and periodic workshops, and publishes educational materials to promote death education and counseling. The Forum's address is P.O Box 1226, Arlington, VA 22210. The Forum publishes a newsletter 10 times per year. This newsletter is edited by Joan McNeil, Ph.D., 2020 Hunting, Manhattan, Kansas 66502.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

There are literally hundreds of books for children and adolescents on the market in which the treatment of death is imbedded in the main theme, but a considerable number of books treat death and grief as the main theme (Wass & Corr, 1982). The majority of these are intended for older children and adolescents. Relatively few books have been written for young children. Those listed here are recommended for the age groups indicated. However, it should be noted that children vary widely in their rate of development, including the cognitive-affective.

Bartoli, J. Nonna. New York: Harvey House, 1975. Fiction. Preschool to age 8.

This story is about a young boy who learns to accept the death of his grandmother Nonna. At first he can't believe that Nonna is gone, that she will no longer give him cookies and gifts nor will ever play with him again. Eventually new people move into Nonna's house and life goes on, but Nonna's memories are cherished. The story portrays the need for patience and the understanding that young children may respond to the death of a loved one in very specific and concrete ways.

Borack, B. Someone small. Color illustrations by Anita Lobel. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1969. Fiction. Preschool to age 8.

This story describes how a young girl gradually comes to accept her new sister, and how she copes with the death of her pet bird, Fluffy. When

Fluffy is dead the sisters wrap him in a handkerchief, kiss him good-bye, put him in a box, say a prayer, and bury him, thus going through a full funeral ritual.

Brown, M.W. The dead bird. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1965. Fiction. Preschool to age 8.

A group of children find a dead bird in the park. They observe what "dead" is like by touching and looking. Then they decide to have a funeral, and bury the bird before resuming their play. Each day the children return to the bird's grave, put fresh flowers on it and sing to the bird. They continue this ritual of mourning "until they forgot". The final illustration depicts the children as they play ball with the bird's grave fading in the background. The story is straightforward, practical and detailed, yet also tender and caring (see also under Audiovisuals).

De Paola, T. Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1973. Fiction. Preschool to age 8.

This low-keyed and simply written story depicts with great ease and care the loving relationships four year-old Tommy has with his great-grandmother (Nana Upstairs) who is bed-ridden and his grandmother (Nana Downstairs). When Nana Upstairs dies, Tommy is very sad. His mother explains: "Nana Upstairs won't be here anymore and won't come back except in your memory". Later Tommy's grandmother gets sick and moves upstairs, and then dies, too. Tommy's belief that both Nanas are upstairs -- in Heaven -- is comforting when he is confronted with the inevitability of death.

Fassler, J. My grandpa died today. Illustrated by Steward Kranz. New York: Human Sciences Press, 1971. Fiction. Preschool to age 8.

This beautifully written story is about a little boy David who tells about his beloved grandfather's death and how he feels about it, how those around him feel, what they do, and particularly how caring and understanding they are toward David. David's grandfather had taught him many things, and had shared his thoughts about life and death. With this memory, David is better able to cope with his grief and can get on with life.

Fitzhugh, L. and Scoppetone, S. Bang bang you're dead. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969. Pictures by Louis Fitzhugh. Fiction. Preschool to age 8.

This little book is about James, Timothy, Stanley, and Bert, who play their games of "Bang Bang You're Dead" almost daily until one day, when four frowning strangers come to the hill and an argument begins and war is declared. The next day the War begins. This time the hitting is real. Real blood flows, and everyone gets hurt. That is when the boys decide that having war isn't fun. The authors portray very effectively how a group of young children discover the seriousness of war and the unreality of make-believe death.

Hughes, P.R. Dying is different. Mahomet, IL: Mech Mentor Educational Publishers, 1978. Nonfiction. Preschool to age 8.

This beautiful book is intended to promote discussion of death between adults and very young children. The eighteen children's pages use drawings,

strong colors, and poems to present a graduated succession of living and dead states in flowers, ants, fish, a cat, and a grandmother, followed by vivid thematic depictions of the inevitability of death, its justification, remembering, acceptance, grief, funerals, cemeteries, and the importance of love during life. An introduction and concluding remarks for parents and teachers suggest questions and guidelines for discussion. A very helpful resource for adult-child interactions that adults can read alone or share together with children.

Kantrowitz, M. When Violet died. New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1973. Fiction. Preschool to age 8.

When Amy's and Eva's pet bird, Violet, dies, the children plan a funeral and a memorial. They invite other children to take part in the ceremony that includes singing, recital of poetry, and serving punch. The children behave very much as adults do when a death occurs, but their grief is quickly resolved when they discover that Blanche, their cat, is pregnant. Excitedly the children await the birth of the kittens. Kantrowitz very skillfully shows the comfort that is derived from the knowledge that life is a continuous process. The story also shows that funerals don't have to be all sad. Written with warmth, compassion, and insight into children's thoughts and feelings.

Ness, E. Sam Bangs and moonshine. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966. Fiction. Preschool to age 8.

Samantha, called Sam, is a fisherman's daughter who envelops herself in a world of fantasy in which her dead mother becomes a mermaid living in a cave, in which Bang, her cat, can talk and have conversations with her

and in which she has a baby kangaroo as a pet. Her father helps Sam to confront reality and distinguish it from moonshine (her fantasy world). A beautiful imaginative story, winner of the 1967 Caldecott Medal.

Smith, D.B. A taste of blackberries. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973. Fiction. Preschool to age 6.

A little boy is confronted with loss, grief, and guilt when his best friend, Jamie, dies from being stung by a bee while the two are picking blackberries. The feeling of guilt is natural enough. Jamie had a way of kidding around, so that when he rolled on the ground after the bee sting, his friend thought he was only joking. After a time, the boy comes to accept his friend's death. This story is simply and sensitively written and richly illustrated. The book won a Child Study Association award.

Stevens, M. When Grandpa died. Pictures by Kenneth Ualand. Chicago, IL: Childrens Press, 1979. Fiction. Preschool to age 6.

Fourteen brightly colored and strikingly beautiful photographs face pages with a brief first person narrative text telling about a little girl's relationship with her grandfather, his assistance in helping her to talk about death and to bury a dead bird that they found, and her efforts (with help from her parents) to cope with his illness and subsequent death. A simple story, directly told.

Stull, E.G. My turtle died today. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1964. Preschool to age 8.

When Boxer, a little boy's pet turtle dies, he and his friends have a funeral and get into a discussion of the meaning of being alive and dead.

As the children look at new kittens they realize that "they have to live first before they die". The story is rather contrived and didactic. Despite this shortcoming, the concepts of life and death are presented in a simple and understandable manner. (See also under Audiovisuals.)

Tresselt, A. Illustrated by Charles Robins. The dead tree. New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1972. Fiction. Preschool to age 7.

This unusual book depicts poetically and through illustration the life cycle of an oak tree. Death is portrayed as a natural and necessary part of this life cycle. It is shown that in nature nothing is ever wasted and nothing completely dies -- a hopeful message for the young reader.

Viorst, J. The tenth good thing about Barney. New York: Atheneum, 1971. Fiction. Age 5-9.

When the little boy's cat, Barney, dies, his mother helps him prepare for the funeral and offers comfort by asking the boy to think of ten good things about Barney. He can only think of nine, but with the help of his father he is able to add the tenth good thing: "Barney is in the ground and he's helping grow flowers". Although many young children may not understand the concept of Barney's role as fertilizer, the language is generally simple and concrete. The story is gentle and hopeful, and portrays parents who are deeply sensitive to children's needs and capable of giving them comfort.

AUDIOVISUALS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

There are literally over 500 audiovisuals available today, a good many of them for children and adolescents (Wass, et. al., 1980). However, very few of them are suitable for young children. This fact is reflected in the listing.

It should be mentioned that film distributors frequently change. In the event one or the other of the audiovisuals listed here are no longer distributed by the names and addresses provided, it will be easy for personnel at nearby audiovisual centers to furnish the most recent distributor.

THE DEAD BIRD. Indiana University, Audio-Visual Center, Bloomington, IN 47401; color film, 13 minutes, 1972.

The Dead Bird (see under Children's Literature), Margaret Wise Brown's story of a group of children, is the basis of this film with cartoon pictures and voice-over narration. It is well done and could be used in conjunction with the book.

DEATH - A NATURAL PART OF LIVING. Marsh Film Enterprises, P.O. Box 8082, Shawnee Mission, KS 66208; filmstrip (65 frames) and audiocassette or record, teacher's guide, 1977.

This program, suitable more for ages 6 to 8 than younger groups, reviews a variety of death-related matters. It also surveys attitudes toward death in other countries at other times. Throughout the program the key point is what the title indicates.

DEATH: HOW CAN YOU LIVE WITH IT? Walt Disney Educational Media Company, 500 S. Buena Vista St., Burbank, CA 91521; color, 19 minutes, 1977.

This clip from the Walt Disney film "Napoleon and Samantha" focuses on the reaction of a young boy to the dying of his grandfather. The film could be effective in triggering discussion. A Teacher's Guide is included for this purpose.

EMILY: THE STORY OF A MOUSE. Viewfinders, Inc., Box 1665, Evanston, IL 60204; 5 minutes, 1975.

This is a simple, beautiful story that introduces the concept of death at the elementary school level. It depicts the life of a field mouse who grows, becomes an adult, raises her children, and then dies. Even in her death life continues as her body gives nourishment and warmth for new life.

MY TURTLE DIED TODAY. BFA Educational Media, 2211 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, CA 90404; color film, 5 minutes.

This little cartoon is based on the story by the same title (See under Children's Literature). It is suitable for the same age group as the book and could be used along with or following the reading.

RABBIT. Viewfinders, Inc., Box 1665, Evanston, IL 60204; color, 15 minutes, 1974.

A young boy discovers that taking care of three pet rabbits is more work than he thought. So he finds homes for two of them and releases the third in the woods. Then he feels sad and guilty when he discovers it dead. The boy's first encounter with death is complicated by the burden of responsibility. This is a sensitive film that portrays with deep insight a child's reactions to death and loss.

UNDERSTANDING CHANGES IN THE FAMILY: PLAYING DEAD. Guidance Associates, Communications Park, Box 300, White Plains, N.Y. 10603; color filmstrip and audiocassette or record, 5 minutes.

This filmstrip, one in a series concerning children and the family, is designed for the audience of children to role-play. While the role-playing is going on someone remembers the death of a grandfather and the following discussion is intended for children to share their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. This can be very effective.

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